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The Digital Channel Governance Framework for Managing Direct-to-Consumer, Marketplace, Social Commerce, and Partner Channels

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Abstract

Firms increasingly manage portfolios of digital channels that include direct-to-consumer storefronts, third-party marketplaces, social commerce environments, and digitally enabled partner channels. Each channel provides different opportunities for reach, margin capture, customer engagement, and data access. Yet each also introduces different governance demands because the firm does not exercise equal control across all digital routes to market.

The central problem addressed in this article is that many firms expand their digital channel presence faster than they develop governance systems capable of coordinating these channels. As a result, channel conflict, inconsistent pricing, fragmented customer data, brand dilution, and misaligned partner incentives become recurring managerial problems. These issues are especially acute when channels simultaneously cooperate and compete for customers, revenue, information, and strategic attention.

The objective of this article is to develop the Digital Channel Governance Framework as a conceptual tool for managing diverse digital channels in a coordinated manner. The framework is designed for firms operating across direct-to-consumer, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels. It treats digital channel management not as a collection of separate tactical decisions but as an integrated governance problem.

The framework shows that effective digital channel governance requires balancing channel-specific autonomy with portfolio-level alignment. It defines governance requirements for direct-to-consumer, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels, and it proposes mechanisms for pricing consistency, data integration, brand control, incentive alignment, and conflict resolution. The contribution is a practical and conceptual framework for moving from siloed digital channel management toward integrated channel portfolio governance.

Keywords Framework, Marketplace, Digital channel governance, Direct-to-consumer, Social commerce, Partner channels

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Introduction

Digital commerce has moved firms from relatively linear channel structures toward complex portfolios of owned, platform-based, social, and partner-mediated channels. Omnichannel research shows that customers increasingly move across online and offline touchpoints, creating pressure for firms to coordinate channel functions, information flows, and

customer experiences rather than manage each channel as an isolated route to market [1]. This shift has made channel strategy a governance issue because firms must decide not only where to sell, but also how channels should interact, compete, and share data. The problem becomes more strategic when channel additions alter brand control, pricing discipline, customer ownership, and the firm's dependence on external intermediaries.

Earlier multichannel and omnichannel work emphasizes integration, but the digital environment has intensified the governance burden because platform rules, algorithmic visibility, partner incentives, and customer journey fragmentation now shape channel performance. Retailers' cross-channel integration depends on organizational adoption processes and managerial willingness to coordinate technological and strategic change [2]. At the same time, omnichannel planning requires firms to align channel roles, communication, service standards, and performance measurement across customer touchpoints [3]. These insights suggest that the core problem is not simply channel expansion, but the absence of a governance architecture that defines decision rights, control mechanisms, and coordination routines.

The governance problem is especially visible when firms operate a direct-to-consumer channel while also relying on marketplaces, social commerce platforms, resellers, affiliates, and distributors. Customer journeys often cross multiple interaction points, and customers may choose channels based on convenience, price, trust, platform familiarity, or service expectations [4]. Augmented and digitally mediated interaction environments further complicate this structure because customer experience is increasingly shaped by interfaces, platform affordances, and data-enabled personalization rather than by a single owned channel [5]. Firms therefore require a governance logic that connects channel design with brand consistency, customer experience, data access, and revenue discipline.

This article proposes the Digital Channel Governance Framework to address this gap. The framework is developed as an original conceptual synthesis that draws on channel conflict, omnichannel integration, direct-to-consumer strategy, marketplace dependence, social commerce, and partner coordination research. It argues that firms should treat DTC, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels as a governed portfolio rather than as separate growth initiatives. The aim is to provide a strategic governance model that helps managers define channel roles, allocate control rights, coordinate incentives, integrate data, and reduce conflict across the digital channel system.

Digital Channel Governance Challenge

The digital channel governance challenge begins with the fact that channels are simultaneously complementary and competitive. Research on channel conflict in emerging and digitalizing markets shows that small retailers and intermediaries often perceive online expansion as a threat when manufacturers or brands use digital channels to bypass or undercut existing partners [6]. Similar tensions arise when firms operate both online and offline channels, because pricing, service responsibilities, and customer access may become contested across channel actors [7]. Governance is therefore needed to prevent channel expansion from becoming a source of internal competition, partner distrust, and strategic fragmentation.

Single-channel management approaches are inadequate because each digital channel operates according to different rules of control. DTC channels maximize brand control and data ownership, marketplaces provide reach but impose platform rules, social commerce enables engagement but depends on algorithmic visibility, and partner channels extend market coverage but require incentive alignment. Omnichannel business research suggests that channel coordination must move beyond operational integration toward a strategic understanding of how digital and physical channels jointly shape business models [8]. In this view, governance must define how much autonomy each channel receives and which portfolio-level rules cannot be violated.

Poor governance can generate direct performance costs. Channel conflict can weaken relationship quality, reduce cooperation, and distort partner behaviour, although some forms of conflict may also expose strategic misalignment that firms need to address [9]. Contractual channel governance research indicates that performance depends on balancing efficiency and power, rather than assuming that stronger control automatically improves outcomes [10]. This means digital

channel governance should not rely only on rigid rules; it should combine formal policies with adaptive relational and technological mechanisms.

Digital channel governance also involves information control and customer ownership. Informational challenges in omnichannel marketing arise when firms cannot connect customer behaviour, channel attribution, pricing exposure, and service experiences across touchpoints [11]. Without integrated data governance, firms may overinvest in channels that appear productive in isolation but erode margins, cannibalize owned channels, or weaken customer trust. The governance challenge is therefore to create a coordinated system in which channels can specialize while still contributing to a unified commercial and brand strategy.

Direct-to-Consumer Channel Logic

The direct-to-consumer channel is strategically attractive because it gives firms greater control over brand presentation, pricing architecture, customer data, and post-purchase relationships. Research on digital disintermediation shows that brands increasingly use digital channels to reduce dependence on intermediaries and establish more direct relationships with customers [12]. In governance terms, DTC is not merely a sales outlet; it is a control mechanism that allows the firm to manage customer experience, collect first-party data, and test value propositions. However, these advantages also create responsibility for fulfilment, service recovery, returns, privacy management, and customer relationship continuity.

The economic logic of DTC is often framed around margin capture and customer lifetime value, but governance decisions determine whether those benefits are realized. Subscription-based DTC channel additions can affect firm value because they alter recurring revenue expectations, customer relationships, and investor perceptions of growth quality [13]. DTC models therefore require clear rules for pricing, customer acquisition spending, retention management, and channel-specific profitability assessment. Firms must also decide whether DTC should operate as the primary commercial channel, an experimental channel, a loyalty channel, or a complementary brand-control mechanism.

DTC governance becomes more complex when the firm continues to depend on retailers, marketplaces, distributors, or resellers. Evidence on digital DTC versus multi-brand operations shows that customers' channel choices depend on perceived convenience, assortment, trust, and channel-specific value, not simply on whether the firm owns the channel [14]. The launch of a direct channel may also require different marketing mix responses depending on retailer characteristics and competitive positioning [15]. This means that DTC governance must establish boundaries for price parity, assortment differentiation, promotional timing, customer data use, and communication with existing partners.

DTC channels therefore require governance mechanisms that combine strategic control with disciplined coordination. The firm should define what customer data the DTC channel is expected to capture, how that data will inform other channels, and how owned-channel promotions will avoid undermining partner relationships. Table 1 outlines the core logic, advantages, and governance requirements of the direct-to-consumer digital channel. These governance choices help distinguish DTC as a strategic control channel rather than a purely transactional e-commerce storefront.

Table 1. Direct-to-Consumer Channel Logic: Strategic Objectives, Control Mechanisms, and Governance Challenges

DTC governance dimension	Strategic objective	Main control mechanisms	Governance challenges	Managerial implication
Brand ownership	Protect and communicate the brand without intermediary distortion	Owned storefront design, controlled content, product storytelling, service standards	Risk of inconsistent brand promises if DTC messaging differs from partner channels	Establish a single brand governance standard across DTC, marketplace, social, and partner channels

Customer data ownership	Capture first-party behavioural, transactional, and relationship data	Customer accounts, CRM integration, consent management, loyalty data, service records	Data may remain siloed in the DTC unit and fail to inform broader channel decisions	Integrate DTC data into a portfolio-level customer data infrastructure
Margin capture	Improve profitability by reducing intermediary dependence	Direct pricing, bundling, subscription offers, owned promotions, fulfilment control	Margin gains can be offset by fulfilment, returns, acquisition, and service costs	Evaluate DTC profitability using full-cost channel economics rather than gross margin alone
Customer relationship control	Build long-term engagement and retention	Direct communication, personalization, loyalty programmes, post-purchase service	Overuse of direct communication can create customer fatigue or privacy concerns	Govern personalization through consent, relevance, and frequency rules
Partner conflict management	Prevent DTC expansion from damaging reseller, marketplace, or distributor relationships	Price parity rules, assortment differentiation, channel role definitions, promotion calendars	Partners may perceive DTC as disintermediation or unfair competition	Define DTC's strategic role and communicate channel boundaries to partners
Operational accountability	Ensure that direct selling capabilities match customer expectations	Fulfilment governance, returns policies, customer service standards, inventory coordination	Operational failures directly damage the brand because no intermediary absorbs responsibility	Treat DTC as an end-to-end operating model, not only a digital sales interface

Marketplace and Social Commerce Channels

Marketplace channels offer firms immediate access to large customer bases, search traffic, logistics ecosystems, and transaction infrastructure, but they also reduce the firm's control over pricing visibility, customer data, merchandising, and competitive adjacency. Research on marketplace sales shows that participation in online marketplaces can influence sales in a retailer's own channels, making marketplace governance a portfolio-level issue rather than a simple distribution expansion decision [16]. Firms must therefore evaluate whether marketplace participation increases incremental demand or shifts customers away from owned channels. The governance challenge is to use marketplace reach without allowing platform dependence to weaken strategic control.

Marketplace governance is further complicated by the dual role of platforms as infrastructure providers and potential competitors. Research on platform-based ecosystems shows that incumbents and platforms often evolve through simultaneous collaboration and competition, creating tensions around access, visibility, control, and value capture [17]. Platform self-preferencing concerns also show that marketplace owners may shape competitive conditions when they sell alongside third-party sellers on their own platforms [18]. For channel governance, this means firms must manage marketplace presence through rules on assortment, price consistency, platform exposure, advertising dependence, and customer data limitations.

Social commerce differs from marketplace commerce because its value is generated through interaction, influence, community, and content-mediated trust. Social commerce research shows that information sharing and brand co-creation

can support engagement, but the firm's brand meaning is partly shaped by users, influencers, and platform interaction dynamics [19]. Live-streaming commerce further intensifies this governance problem because purchase intention may depend on uncertainty reduction, social presence, and real-time persuasion rather than conventional product presentation [20]. **Table 2** compares marketplace and social commerce channels in terms of control, reach, and governance demands.

Table 2. Marketplace and Social Commerce Channels: Platform Dependencies, Revenue Models, and Brand Governance Gaps

Channel type	Strategic value	Platform dependency	Revenue and cost logic	Brand governance gap	Required governance response
Large online marketplaces	Rapid demand access, transaction scale, search visibility, logistics support	High dependency on marketplace rules, rankings, fees, reviews, and platform policies	Sales volume may increase, but fees, advertising costs, price pressure, and margin compression can reduce net value	Brand appears beside competitors and may be reduced to price, rating, and availability comparisons	Define marketplace role, approved assortment, pricing rules, advertising thresholds, and review management standards
Category-specific marketplaces	Access to targeted customers and specialist product discovery environments	Moderate to high dependency on category norms, platform reputation, and seller performance rules	Revenue depends on category fit, commission structures, and conversion efficiency	Brand positioning may be shaped by category conventions rather than firm strategy	Use category-specific content rules, merchandising standards, and channel profitability reviews
Social commerce storefronts	Engagement, discovery, community influence, and frictionless purchase pathways	High dependency on platform algorithms, social visibility, creator behaviour, and content moderation rules	Revenue depends on content performance, campaign timing, creator partnerships, and conversion from engagement	Brand meaning can be diluted by informal content, influencer mismatch, or inconsistent messaging	Establish content governance, influencer approval rules, disclosure standards, and social commerce escalation protocols
Live-streaming commerce	Real-time persuasion, product demonstration, urgency, and interactive selling	High dependency on platform format, host credibility, audience interaction, and algorithmic promotion	Revenue may be campaign-driven and volatile, with costs linked to hosts, production, incentives, and platform support	Sales pressure can create exaggerated claims, inconsistent promises, or trust risks	Govern scripts, claims, promotion limits, host selection, and post-event service commitments
Platform advertising inside marketplaces and social channels	Visibility improvement and demand generation	High dependency on paid ranking systems and platform analytics	Costs can escalate as firms compete for visibility within the same platform	Brand investment may primarily strengthen the platform rather than the firm's	Set portfolio-level advertising budgets, incrementality tests, and data-sharing rules

				owned relationship	
Cross-platform social-to-marketplace journeys	Combines awareness, influence, and transaction convenience	Dependency distributed across multiple external platforms	Revenue attribution becomes difficult because discovery and purchase occur in different environments	Customer experience may fragment between social content and marketplace fulfilment	Integrate campaign tracking, customer service standards, and post-purchase relationship capture mechanisms

The governance trade-off across marketplace and social commerce channels is therefore reach versus control. Meta-analytic evidence on social commerce trust indicates that purchase intention depends strongly on trust-building mechanisms, making governance of information quality, seller credibility, and interaction norms central to channel performance [21]. Reviews of omnichannel risks and benefits also show that both consumers and retailers experience uncertainty when channels multiply and responsibilities become unclear [22]. Firms should therefore treat marketplace and social commerce participation as governed access channels, not as uncontrolled growth extensions.

Partner Channel Coordination

Partner channels include resellers, affiliates, distributors, implementation partners, and B2B intermediaries that extend the firm's reach but introduce interdependence and potential conflict. In business-to-business markets, multichannel sales system design and governance have measurable performance consequences because firms must coordinate direct and indirect sales roles, account ownership, and incentive structures [23]. Digitalization increases this complexity because partners can now operate online storefronts, comparison pages, affiliate funnels, and marketplace listings that affect the same customers reached by the focal firm. Partner channel coordination therefore requires explicit governance over pricing, positioning, lead attribution, and service responsibilities.

The main source of partner conflict is not simply the existence of multiple channels but the absence of clear decision rights. Channel conflict research shows that conflict can arise when digital and physical channel actors perceive unequal treatment, unclear boundaries, or inconsistent incentives [7]. In digital partner environments, these issues may appear as unauthorized discounting, inconsistent product claims, duplicate advertising, customer poaching, or competition between partner-generated leads and owned-channel acquisition. Governance should therefore specify which partners may sell, advertise, discount, bundle, localize content, or access customer information.

Partner governance should also combine contractual, relational, and technological mechanisms. Contractual governance defines rules for pricing, territories, service obligations, brand usage, data sharing, and dispute resolution, while relational governance supports trust, adaptation, and joint problem solving [10]. Technological governance adds partner portals, pricing feeds, product information systems, affiliate tracking, and shared dashboards that reduce ambiguity in execution. **Table 3** identifies coordination mechanisms and conflict sources in digital partner channels.

Table 3. Partner Channel Coordination in Digital Environments: Incentives, Pricing Consistency, and Conflict Resolution

Partner governance area	Common conflict source	Coordination mechanism	Digital governance tool	Expected governance outcome
Pricing consistency	Partners discount below agreed thresholds or create visible price gaps across channels	Minimum advertised price policies, promotion calendars,	Automated price monitoring, marketplace listing scans, partner pricing dashboards	Reduced price conflict and improved customer confidence

		exception approval rules		
Lead ownership	Direct sales, affiliates, and resellers claim the same customer or opportunity	Lead registration rules, attribution windows, channel role definitions	CRM-based lead registration, affiliate tracking, referral codes	Clearer accountability and lower internal competition
Brand representation	Partners use outdated claims, inconsistent visuals, or unauthorized product descriptions	Brand usage guidelines, content approval workflows, training requirements	Digital asset management systems, approved content libraries, compliance alerts	More consistent customer-facing communication
Incentive alignment	Partners prioritize high-commission products or short-term conversions over strategic goals	Tiered incentives, balanced scorecards, partner segmentation	Partner performance dashboards, incentive automation, channel profitability analytics	Better alignment between partner behaviour and firm strategy
Customer data sharing	Partners withhold customer data or use it outside agreed purposes	Data-sharing agreements, consent rules, privacy clauses, access controls	Secure partner portals, permissioned data exchange, audit logs	Improved data visibility with controlled privacy and compliance risk
Conflict resolution	Disputes emerge over customers, territories, pricing, service failures, or campaign overlap	Escalation procedures, mediation routines, governance committees	Ticketing systems, dispute logs, shared channel issue registers	Faster conflict resolution and institutional learning

Digital partner coordination must also recognize that partners vary in strategic importance, capability, and risk. Some partners expand market reach and service capacity, while others mainly create traffic arbitrage or price competition. Research on international digital commerce and platform control suggests that digital sellers operate under varying modes of control depending on platform rules, market conditions, and firm capabilities [24]. Firms should therefore segment partners by strategic value and governance risk instead of applying identical rules to all intermediaries.

Proposed Digital Channel Governance Framework

The proposed Digital Channel Governance Framework is built around the principle that digital channels should be governed as a coordinated portfolio. Omnichannel research emphasizes that integration across the customer journey requires firms to connect channel design, customer experience, and organizational processes rather than treat channels as independent silos [25]. The framework extends this logic by distinguishing four channel types: DTC as a control and data channel, marketplaces as reach and transaction channels, social commerce as engagement and influence channels, and partner channels as extension and relationship channels. Each channel is granted autonomy only within portfolio-level boundaries for pricing, brand representation, customer data, and strategic role clarity.

The second principle is data integration. Omnichannel marketing faces informational challenges when firms cannot connect exposures, transactions, service interactions, and customer behaviour across channels [11]. A governance framework must therefore define data ownership, access rights, quality standards, consent boundaries, and analytical responsibilities across channel units. Without this layer, firms risk mistaking channel activity for channel value because they cannot distinguish incremental demand from cannibalization, duplicated acquisition, or platform-driven dependency.

The third principle is differentiated control. Omnichannel literature shows that firms must coordinate channels, but not all channels should be managed with the same level of centralization or standardization [26]. DTC channels require high

brand and data control, marketplaces require platform risk control, social commerce requires communication and trust governance, and partner channels require incentive and conflict governance. **Table 4** presents the proposed Digital Channel Governance Framework integrating the four channel types.

Table 4. Digital Channel Governance Framework: Principles, Channel-Specific Governance Mechanisms, and Integration Logic

Channel type	Primary strategic role	Main governance principle	Channel-specific mechanisms	Integration logic across the portfolio
Direct-to-consumer	Brand control, customer data ownership, margin capture, relationship development	Strategic centrality with controlled expansion	Owned experience standards, first-party data governance, fulfilment accountability, price and promotion discipline	DTC provides customer insight, brand reference standards, and direct relationship learning for the whole portfolio
Marketplace	Reach, demand capture, transaction convenience, search visibility	Access with dependency control	Assortment rules, marketplace price policies, platform advertising thresholds, review governance, margin monitoring	Marketplace participation is governed as incremental reach, not as an uncontrolled substitute for owned channels
Social commerce	Engagement, discovery, influence, trust-building, community interaction	Engagement with brand and claims discipline	Content approval, creator governance, disclosure rules, live-commerce scripts, social listening, escalation procedures	Social commerce translates brand meaning into interactive formats while feeding demand to owned or approved transaction channels
Partner channels	Market extension, local access, specialized service, relationship coverage	Distributed execution within strategic boundaries	Partner segmentation, incentive design, lead registration, pricing consistency, data-sharing agreements, dispute resolution	Partners extend coverage while operating under shared rules for price, brand, customer ownership, and performance accountability
Cross-channel data layer	Unified customer and performance visibility	Data integration and controlled access	CRM integration, customer identity resolution, consent management, attribution models, channel dashboards	Converts fragmented channel activity into portfolio-level intelligence and governance decisions
Cross-channel governance forum	Ongoing alignment, conflict resolution, and adaptation	Portfolio accountability	Channel council, executive ownership, policy review cadence, exception management, maturity assessment	Ensures that channel decisions are evaluated by total strategic contribution rather than isolated channel metrics

The fourth principle is ongoing governance rather than one-time channel design. Omnichannel research agendas increasingly call for future work on technologies, risk, customer behaviour, and retailer capabilities, indicating that channel

governance must adapt as technologies and customer expectations evolve [27]. The framework therefore includes recurring channel audits, conflict reviews, data quality checks, platform dependency monitoring, and partner performance assessments. In this sense, digital channel governance is a dynamic managerial capability that enables firms to adjust channel boundaries as the commercial environment changes.

Figure 1 illustrates the Digital Channel Governance Framework as an integrated portfolio system for coordinating direct-to-consumer, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels.

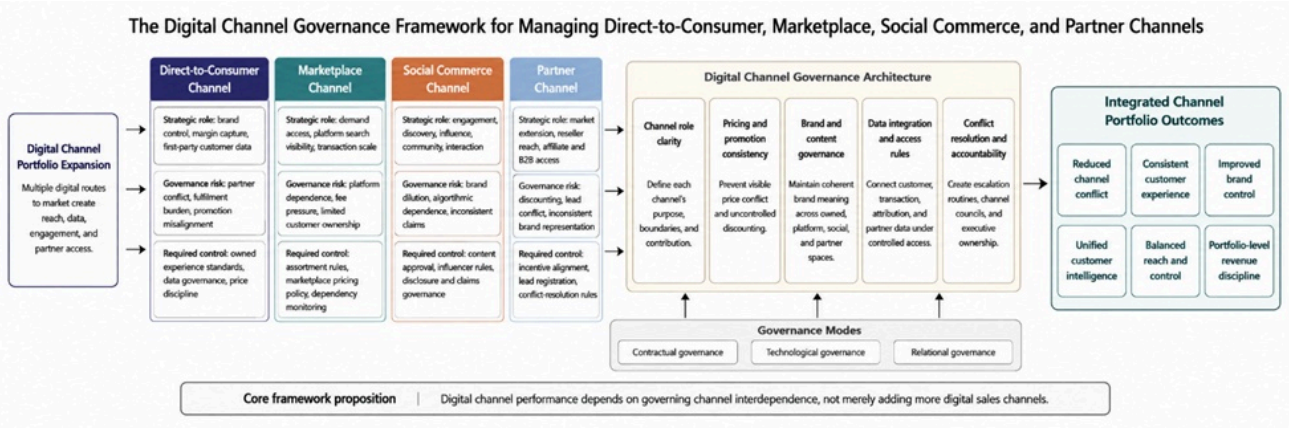


Figure 1. Digital Channel Governance Framework for Coordinating DTC, Marketplace, Social Commerce, and Partner Channels

Implementation Pathway

Implementation should begin with a channel audit that maps each digital channel's role, economics, customer overlap, data access, governance risks, and strategic contribution. This audit should not only list existing channels but also identify where channels compete for the same customer, communicate inconsistent promises, or operate with incompatible pricing and data practices. Structured omnichannel reviews show that firms need to synthesize channel design, customer behaviour, and organizational capability before developing coordinated strategies [26]. The first implementation output should therefore be a channel role map that separates control channels, reach channels, engagement channels, and partner-extension channels.

The second step is a governance maturity assessment followed by a phased integration roadmap. Omnichannel planning research suggests that effective programmes require staged decisions about channel coordination, technology, organization, and customer experience [3]. A maturity model should assess whether the firm has basic channel visibility, shared policies, integrated data, cross-channel performance metrics, and conflict-resolution routines. The roadmap should then prioritize high-risk gaps such as inconsistent marketplace pricing, weak partner rules, fragmented customer identity, or uncontrolled social commerce claims.

The third step is organizational alignment around channel governance ownership. Because digital channel decisions cut across marketing, sales, e-commerce, IT, legal, operations, and partner management, firms may require a senior integrative role such as a Chief Channel Officer or a cross-functional channel governance council. Research on omnichannel interaction choice and customer journeys indicates that customers do not experience channels according to internal organizational boundaries [4]. Implementation should therefore align internal accountability with the customer's cross-channel reality by creating shared dashboards, escalation rules, and portfolio-level performance measures.

Figure 2 presents the implementation pathway for moving from fragmented digital channel management to integrated channel portfolio governance.

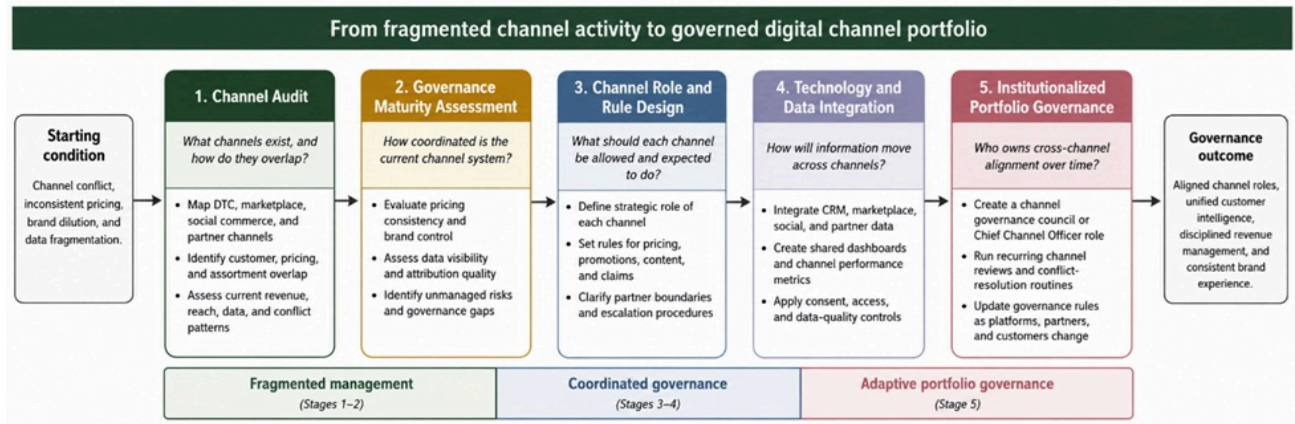


Figure 2. Implementation Pathway for Digital Channel Governance Maturity

Limitations

The first limitation is that the Digital Channel Governance Framework is conceptual and has not been empirically validated. Although it synthesizes peer-reviewed research on omnichannel integration, marketplace participation, social commerce, DTC strategy, and channel governance, it does not test causal relationships or performance outcomes. Research on subscription-based DTC channel additions and marketplace effects demonstrates that channel choices can have measurable but context-dependent consequences [13, 16]. Future research should therefore examine whether firms using integrated governance mechanisms achieve higher profitability, lower conflict, stronger customer trust, or better channel resilience.

The second limitation is that the framework may oversimplify sector-specific channel dynamics. Fashion, consumer electronics, software, healthcare products, industrial equipment, and consumer packaged goods differ in margins, regulatory exposure, partner dependence, fulfilment complexity, and customer decision processes. Research on DTC consumer attitudes in fashion contexts shows that customer responses to direct channels can depend on category-specific trust, brand familiarity, and repurchase motivations [28]. Sector-specific applications of the framework may therefore require different governance priorities, such as service assurance in complex products or authenticity control in branded consumer goods.

The third limitation is that external platform policies, privacy regulation, competition rules, and algorithmic changes can rapidly alter channel governance requirements. Marketplace and social commerce channels are especially exposed to platform rule changes, advertising cost inflation, data-access restrictions, and changing customer discovery patterns. Research on emerging omnichannel technologies and platform-mediated retailing suggests that governance frameworks must remain adaptive rather than fixed [27]. The framework should therefore be treated as a living governance architecture that requires periodic review as channel technologies and institutional conditions change.

Conclusion

This article developed the Digital Channel Governance Framework for firms managing direct-to-consumer, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels simultaneously. The framework responds to a central managerial problem: digital channel expansion creates value only when channels are coordinated through clear governance principles, mechanisms, and responsibilities. Without such coordination, firms risk turning channel diversity into channel conflict, brand inconsistency, data fragmentation, and strategic confusion.

The framework's main contribution is to shift digital channel management from a siloed operational view to an integrated portfolio governance view. It shows that DTC, marketplace, social commerce, and partner channels each require different

forms of control, but these controls must be aligned through shared rules for pricing, brand representation, data integration, customer experience, and conflict resolution. This approach allows firms to preserve the distinctive value of each channel while reducing the risks created by unmanaged overlap.

For managers, the framework offers a practical pathway for auditing channels, assessing governance maturity, integrating data, coordinating partners, and institutionalizing cross-channel accountability. For researchers, it offers a conceptual platform for empirical testing across industries, firm sizes, and channel configurations. The broader implication is that the future of digital channel strategy will depend less on adding more channels and more on governing channel portfolios with discipline, adaptability, and strategic coherence.

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